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MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 3, 2008

Chair John Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice-Chair Lenny Levy, Commissioners Matthew Hopkins and Danny Winborne, Alternate Commissioner Geri Lanier, Planning Director Lauren Pruss, Community Planning Director Trudy Schwarz, Planner Jacqueline Marsh, and Recording Secretary Myriam Gonzalez. Chair Bauer noted Alternate Commissioner Lanier would actively participate this evening, since not all Commissioners were present. Absent: Commissioner Lloyd Kaufman.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 6, 2008, Planning Commission Meeting

Commissioner Hopkins moved, seconded by Alternate Commissioner Lanier, to APPROVE the Minutes of the August 6, 2008, Planning Commission Meeting as submitted.

Vote: 3-0-2 (Abstained: Levy and Winborne)

II. RECORD PLAT

R-1245 -- Olde Towne – 316 East Diamond Avenue
Parcel B/Block E

Vice-Chair Levy moved, seconded by Alternate Commissioner Lanier, to APPROVE the Record Plat Agenda.

Vote: 5-0

III. CONSENT

SP-07-0001 -- Asbury Methodist Village R-90 Zone
201 Russell Avenue
43 Single-Family Homes
EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Vice-Chair Levy moved, seconded by Alternate Commissioner Lanier, to APPROVE the Consent Agenda.

Vote: 5-0

IV. SITE PLANS

AFP-08-025 -- Kentlands Performing Arts Studio MXD Zone
(Formerly General Store)
4 Kent Gardens Circle
Reuse to Arts School
AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN REVIEW

Planner Marsh located the property on an aerial photograph and introduced the applicant.

Applicant, Paul Poto, discussed the business operations of the proposed studio for dance and music classes. He noted that students would be dropped off or walk to the site.

Engineer for the applicant, Gary Unterberg, Rodgers Consulting, presented the revised plan and cited the proposed changes, namely, a notation on the uses, the parking chart and the new parking total. He discussed the parking proposal and noted that after restriping, in accordance with staff's recommendation, the new total parking would be 50 spaces, of which four would be surplus. He pointed out that shared parking was not utilized in the parking calculations of this revised plan.

In response to questions of the Commission, staff explained the basis for the allocation of parking for the separate uses, signage, and sound proofing. Regarding the latter, Mr. Poto indicated that sound insulation measures are under consideration. It was noted the Kentlands Citizens Assembly had approved the proposal.

The following was testimony from the public in favor of the proposal:

Marsha Hopp, 303 Kent Oaks Way, noted the proposed studio use is not expected to significantly impact the community in terms of noise, given the proximity of Rachel Carlson Elementary School. She added that the hours of operation of the studio are consistent with the school. She voiced her support of the extra parking spaces to be gained by restriping.

Richard Arkin, 121 Selby Street, voiced his preference of the proposed reuse over the previous office, as it is more harmonious with the existing surrounding uses. He favored including sound proofing as a condition of approval and requested that the cost of restriping the parking be the applicant's responsibility.

In response to Chair Bauer, staff briefly discussed the restriping aspect of the plan/approval. Chair Bauer noted that no additional condition for noise proofing measures would be necessary, since enforcement mechanisms are already in place, established by the City's Noise Ordinance. Commissioner Hopkins commented favorably on the proposal.

Ms. Marsh voiced staff's recommendation for approval as the plan meets the approval criteria of the Zoning Ordinance, subject to the condition listed in the following motion:

Commissioner Winborne moved, seconded by Commissioner Hopkins, to grant AFP-08-025 - Kentlands Performing Arts Studio, AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN APPROVAL, finding it in compliance with Zoning Ordinance §§ 24-170 and 24-172, with the following condition:

1. The applicant shall double-stripe the parking stalls in accordance with City standards.

Vote: 5-0

AFP-08-027 -- West End at Watkins Mill Town Center
Metropolitan Grove Road
Lot Line Adjustments
AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN REVIEW

MXD Zone

Planner Marsh located the site on an illustrated plan and introduced the applicant's representative.

Engineer for the applicant, Gary Unterberg, Rodgers Consulting, speaking on behalf of the applicant, Classic Group, presented the proposed plan, noting it proposes to change 12 townhouse buildings (69 total units) from 20-foot wide townhouses to 18 feet and 24 feet wide townhouses, all of which will fit within the same area as previously approved. He noted the locations of the revised units and provided a progress report on the construction of the project. Regarding the architecture of these units, he indicated that although all would have brick fronts, there had been a reduction of four-sided masonry from 60 percent to 56 percent. He added, however, that the single-family products north of Watkins Mill Road will now be four-sided masonry.

Architect for the applicant, James McDonald, the Lessard Group, presented the proposed architectural elevations and sample color schemes and materials, noting three-story units with stoops, an optional fourth-floor loft, and pre-selected color schemes. He answered questions regarding clustered utility boxes and distribution of optional lofts within the townhouse buildings.

There was no testimony from the public.

Planner Marsh voiced staff's recommendation for approval as the plan meets the approval criteria of the Zoning Ordinance, with conditions as previously listed in the Staff Comments.

Commissioner Winborne voiced a concern over the extent of the proposed reductions. Chair Bauer pointed out, however, that this change has a potential for an interesting unit mix, but called attention to the importance of architectural details on elevations facing alleys, given their high visibility. Chair Bauer was concerned with the applicant's choice of materials and colors, noting that although the materials were of good quality, more variety and contrast was needed. Chair Bauer voiced additional concerns over the location of compressors and the look of the lofts, noting that brick should be extended to all the façades of the lofts and that an overhang detail should be designed when lofts are placed on an end unit.

Commissioner Hopkins shared Chair Bauer's comments on the alley facades, the need for a bolder contrast of the material color schemes for the units and a better architectural incorporation of the loft extensions, as well as alternate window configurations. He noted that the goal of this plan design should be to create a community with a different architectural identity, given its isolated location and unique design demands as stipulated in its design guidelines. The Commission discussed language for an additional condition to address the above concerns and moved as follows:

Vice-Chair Levy moved, seconded by Alternate Commissioner Lanier, to grant AFP-08-027 - West End at Watkins Mill Town Center, AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN APPROVAL, finding it in compliance with Zoning Ordinance §§ 24-170 and 24-172, with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall receive approval of the final record plats from the City Planning Commission and record them in the land records of Montgomery County before the issuance of building permits;
2. The applicant shall provide a minimum of two fourth-story lofts per townhouse stick, one of which shall be required to be on an end unit;

3. The applicant shall provide a minimum of six (6) four-sided single-family detached units with a full stone façade to be reviewed and approved at a later date; and
4. The applicant is to work with staff on developing an alternate design scheme for the fourth-story loft exterior and an alternate color material scheme for the townhouses for a broader/bolder range for the Planning Commission's consent approval.

Vote: 5-0

V. FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Winborne

Reiterated his previous request for a needed modification to the traffic signal at the Kentlands Boulevard/Longdraft Road/Md. Rte. 124 intersection to facilitate left-turning movements from Kentlands Boulevard onto Md. 124 in the presence of oncoming (southbound) traffic from Longdraft Road.

Chair Bauer

1. Complimented Planning and Code Administration and Public Works staffs on putting curb and gutter at the out parcel adjacent to the entrance to Lakelands.
2. Inquired about the status of draft Text Amendment T-385 (mansionization). Planning Director Pruss stated that a joint work session is scheduled for Monday, September 22.

Commissioner Hopkins

Reported the Mayor and City Council held a public hearing to establish a Green Building Ordinance in the City, noting the draft ordinance is a good step forward towards establishing improved building codes and increasing the green building stock in the City.

VI. FROM STAFF

Listed the Commission's upcoming regular meetings and the joint work session on T-385 to be held on September 22.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before this session, the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Gonzalez
Recording Secretary